ON GUARD FOR 186 YEARS

Detroit Free Press

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Michigan takes on South Carolina in Outback Bowl.
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Feds look into 2016 Ford recall

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Ringing in 2018 (a little early)

The 'D Drop' party started at 4 p.m. for anyone with an early bedtime.

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High 14° ▫ Low 4°
Bitterly cold. Forecast, **2A**

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WON & DONE?

Lions end season — and perhaps the Caldwell era — with victory

Detroit Lions head coach Jim Caldwell hugs Quandre Diggs at the end of the 35-11 victory over the Green Bay Packers at Ford Field on Sunday. KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Shawn Windsor
Columnist
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

It was fun for a while Sunday afternoon at Ford Field. New Year's Eve will do this: The revelry. The hope. The future.

And for most of the 45,000 — or so — fans who showed up to close out another Detroit Lions season, the high point arrived late in the fourth quarter, when running back Ameer Abdullah took a direct snap on a two-point conversion attempt, pitched the ball to receiver Golden Tate, then watched as Tate threw a perfect spiral to Matthew Stafford.

Wait ... what?

A quarterback alone in the end zone waiting to catch the ball?

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Change is a comin'?

Jim Caldwell holds the best regular-season winning percentage (.563) of any Detroit Lions coach in the Super Bowl era. Yet, his job status is in jeopardy after missing the playoffs for the second time in four seasons. Caldwell's record, by season:

2014: 11-5 (lost to Cowboys in playoffs)

2015: 7-9 (missed playoffs)

2016: 9-7 (lost to Cowboys in playoffs)

2017: 9-7 (missed playoffs)

Overall: 36-28

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

No letup on drug cost hikes in 2017

Public pressure helps deliver small victories in Mich., U.S.

JC Reindl Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

We are still losing the battle to contain fast-rising drug prices in Michigan and across the country, but increased scrutiny of pricey pharmaceuticals led to some minor victories in 2017 for more affordable health care, according to several of Michigan's larger insurers.

Prices for many popular branded drugs that made big jumps in recent years, such as insulin and rheumatoid arthritis treatments, experienced more modest increases in 2017 — although increases were still well above the general inflation rate of around 2%.

That was largely because drugmakers including AbbieVie, Allergan, Novo Nordisk and Sanofi publicly pledged to keep their drug price increases at 10% or less in 2017.

"We have seen a little bit slower increase in prices this year due to public pressure," said Tony Petitta, a vice president with Health Alliance Plan. "Many drug companies have publicly stated they're going to keep it under 10% per year, which is still pretty high ... where before they were going up 14%, 15%, sometimes 20%."

Those vows to cap price increases came amid a public uproar against pharmaceutical price spikes.

There was intense media coverage when prices for a two-pack of EpiPens (used to treat potentially fatal allergic reactions) zoomed from $160 to more than $600, and when Turing Pharmaceuticals — a company then helmed by young, brash CEO Martin Shkreli — hiked the price of an old drug used by AIDS and cancer patients from $13.50 to $750 per tablet.

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Federal officials: We'll approve sandhill crane hunt if asked

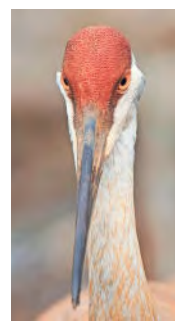
Keith Matheny Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

A controversial proposal to hunt sandhill cranes in Michigan for the first time in generations would be supported by the agency that gets the final say if state officials ever ask for a hunt: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the chief of the federal agency's migratory bird program said.

There's federal jurisdiction over the long-legged wetlands birds, as they are a migratory species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. While sandhill crane hunts exist in a number of western states, where there are more of the birds, they've only in recent years gained sufficient numbers to consider a hunt in what's known as the eastern population, generally east of the Mississippi River to the Atlantic coast.

A 2010 management plan for the eastern population included input from states all along the migratory flyway, including the Michigan Department of Resources. The plan lays out the parameters for states in the flyway to establish hunting seasons for sandhill cranes, if their surveyed populations meet certain parameters. And they do, said Tom Cooper, chief of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's migratory bird program.

If Michigan follows the section of the plan laying out the sandhill crane harvest strategy, "the Fish and Wildlife Service would likely grant them a season," he said.



Sandhill crane

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